

**Self-help Projects in Rural Otegbo Community in Ughelli South Local  
Government Area, Delta State, Nigeria: The Place of Community  
Development Experts  
By**

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**Abstract**

This study sought to investigate problems, if any, militating against execution of self-help projects in rural Otegbo community and how to reduce such factors to the barest minimal in Ughelli South Local Government Area of Delta state, Nigeria. A cross sectional survey design and multistage sampling technique were adopted for the study. A questionnaire schedule, IDI and FGD guides were used for data collection. Analysis of quantitative data was done using SPSS Version 22. The projects were mainly sustainable. However, low educational level of the community members was the major problem that militated against execution of the self-help projects and their sustainability in the study area, the need for involvement of social workers (community development experts) in rural development process were advanced.

**Keywords: Self-help Projects, Rural, Otegbo, Development, Sustainability**

**Introduction**

Self-help project could be seen as a concrete arrangement that emanates from wide range of articulated plan, implemented, monitored, and evaluated by the community members themselves, in order to attain their desired life aspirations, without assistance from external donor agency. In

other words, the community harnesses its skills, ideas, and available resources to address prioritised needs on their own. This enables them to bring about positive changes in their socio-economic and psychological well-being. Ebong, Otu, and Ogwumike (2013) observed that self-help approach to community development seeks to optimally harness the human and material resources of a given community in order to improve the living conditions of its members. Self-help as a strategy for rural development could be seen as a movement to promote better living for the whole community. Ultimately, community self-help strategy has to do with inducing changes in the rural areas for the achievement of an enhanced welfare for all the rural dwellers. Thus, self-help strategy could be seen as a programme of actions involving the concerted efforts of members of a community aimed at providing solution to identified felt-need(s) by themselves in order to raise their standards of living.

Self-help projects can only be successfully attained by active participation of community members in the development process. The community members, as many as are willing, should be given the enabling environment to get involved, actively, in the process of needs assessment, decision making, implementation of decision taken, monitoring of the activity, evaluation of action taken, and utilisation of outcomes. These outcomes should provide access to health care, education, employment with good working conditions and commensurate income, security of life and property, leisure facilities, market, and comfortable housing to community members without segregation. Self-help projects should be guided towards provision of services, continuously, to the present generation and beyond. Thus, there is need for effective community sensitisation and mobilisation to enable rural community members to participate in development issues that affect their lives. This is because, when the people are actively involved in projects, they see them as their properties and as such guard them jealously (Ofuoku, (2011) so that the present and future generation would benefit from them. Thus, community

participation has been recognized as a strategy that brings about effective development as peoples' involvement gives sense of belonging which in turn yields a sustainable development (Danladi & Adefila, 2014).

Assessment of self-help projects has been the focus of various studies because of the belief that such projects are executed by the beneficiaries themselves, and as such, participation and sustainability would be high, thereby improving the living standard of the people greatly. For instance, Tamuno and Iroh (2012), in their study carried out in Ohafia Local Government Area, observed that several infrastructural facilities such as schools, health centres/hospitals, civic centres, rural water supply, and bridges/culverts etc. which were embarked upon by the communities helped to reduce unemployment to an extent. They also observed that there was a considerable improvement in the level of income of the people as a result of the self- help projects. The study concluded that self- help is a relevant strategy for rural development in the study area. Similarly, other scholars in their investigation of Bakassi resettlement programme in Cross River State, Nigeria, noted that self-help projects, such as, construction and maintenance of roads, bridges, culverts, market site, primary school block, a health post, rice mill, corn mill, and measures that secure their lives and properties were provided (Isokon & Okom, 2014).

Furthermore, another study carried out in Ibesikpo community of Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria, revealed that community self-help employment programme, community self-help education programme, and community self-help health/maternity programme significantly influenced rural development in the study area. The study concluded that the literacy level achieved through the establishment of primary and secondary school, adult education programmes as well as the sponsorship of youth from the communities for various educational programmes impacted positively on the development of Afaha Udo Eyop, Ikot Akan Etok and Nung Ukana villages in Ibesikpo, Akwa Ibom state (Udo-Imeh & Essien, 2015).

Akpomuvie (2010) in his study in 20 communities in Ethiopia East and West Local Government Areas of Delta State showed that self-help projects have been successful in Urhobo-land simply because participants see them as their own, meeting and satisfying their needs. The results further showed that 100 percent involvement is the case from conception to execution, and there was sustenance of such facilities.

Contrarily, a study conducted in Zungeru, Niger State revealed that the projects were mainly inadequate. This was due to financial constraints, socio-political constraints, lack of co-operation and mismanagement of projects funds, land acquisition, and lack of technical aids. The study further observed that government contribution towards community development has been very insignificant in terms of financial aids, technical aids for projects execution, material provision for construction and rehabilitation of community facilities (Shaibu, 2014). In the same vein, Nwobashi and Itumo (2019) in their study, conducted in Ebonyi state of Nigeria, discovered that town unions have not contributed significantly in the provision of electricity in their rural communities. This was due to various problems, such as, the partisan interests, clientele patronage, beneficiary interests, political differences, lack of funds, illiteracy, and lack of regular trainings and retraining of the town unions' executives.

Also, Enefiok and Ekong (2014) findings from their study carried out in Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria showed that lack of maintenance, lack of community participation, lack of coordination and cooperation among the stakeholders, political factor, inefficient monitoring, and poor attitude towards public property were the factors that affected sustainability in water projects in the study area. The study concluded that the projects, in most cases, were funded by the communities' members and other bodies, and that those counter partly funded were highly sustainable than those solely funded by government.

Furthermore, other scholars in their study conducted in Mansa Diocese, Zambia, revealed that the project suffered sustainability due to poor community participation, low educational levels among households, undiversified households and poor understanding of governance. The study further observed that women were the most uneducated and least to participate in community projects (Lungo, Mavole & Martin, 2017). Ndubuisi-Okolo and Anekwe (2018) in their findings, based on literature review, indicated that sustainable development could be achievable in Nigeria only when social, economic, political and environmental sustainability elements are stable, viable and equitable. Also, Kamar, Lawal, Babangida and Jahun (2014) opined that to accelerate and sustain rural development in Nigeria, the following measures should be given urgent consideration: Increasing state and people's participation, encouraging community organization, mobilizing the women group, manpower development, establishment of "parent" rural development directorate, effective community banking system, promoting viable cooperatives, establishment of community viewing centers, use of direct labour as opposed to contractors and rural development centres.

Danladi, and Adefila (2014) based on their study, revealed that project sustainability strategies that can be adopted include project operation and maintenance, participatory strategy of need identification, regular fund sourcing, location of projects at points that are central to all beneficiaries, and carrying along traditional rulers at the village level as well as political leaders at the local and state government levels. The study also indicated that a large proportion of the leadership of the self-help groups is more of males than females, and as such, men were more interested and involved in the development of their community than the women, despite that the people's culture also affected the women's participation (Danladi & Adefila, 2014). Lungo et al., (2017) observed from study findings that households were in support of community participation, education, income diversification and governance as determinants of project sustainability in

Kabunda and Mansa parishes in Zambia. However, the study also indicated that most households participated more in implementation than planning and decision making.

This study is anchored on empowerment theory; its origin is credited to Solomon (1976). According to the originator, the core assumption of the theory is that personal, interpersonal and environmental resources are needed to update the skills, knowledge and motivation of people to achieve valid social roles. Carr (2011) defines empowerment as a process of nurturing opportunities for people to take ownership in becoming self-sufficient, self-confident, and self-supporting in social, political, economic, and psychological awareness. This process assists individuals to perform self-assessments of power that exist within them, to enable them to maximize control and use the power to produce desired outcomes. Empowerment theory is relatively new in social work and has drawn from other social science disciplines, such as political science, psychology, sociology, economics and religion. Empowerment is:

the capacity of individuals, groups and/or communities to take control of the circumstances, exercise power and achieve their own goals, and the process by which, individually and collectively, they are able to help themselves and others to maximise the quality of their lives (Adams, 2008: 17).

Therefore, empowerment theory helps people to exercise more control over their lives (Aimaseb & Julia, 2007). The methodological underpinning of empowerment can be found in social group work (Vansevenant, Driessens & Regenmortel, 2008). Empowerment requires social workers to take a stand against injustice and individualised policies and programmes which disregard the structural causes of social problems, and rather ascribe everything to individual responsibility. A transformative definition of empowerment is based on the idea of common but

differentiated responsibilities (Peters, 2012) and collaboration (Vansevant, et al, 2008). Thus, empowerment theory fights oppression and poverty by assisting the marginalised and deprived communities and their members to increase their ability to make and execute decisions bothering on their well-being. And as such, the rural dwellers should be given, generally, the opportunity to participate in decision making and implementation of relevant choices that actually meet their life aspirations.

Self-help projects have been the focus of many studies. For example, Ofuoku and Albert (2014) looked at rural women farmers' assessment of credit oriented self-help groups in Delta state, Nigeria. Akpomovie (2010) investigated self-help as a strategy for rural development in Nigeria: A bottom-up approach. Saliu, (2014) conducted an evaluation of self-help community development projects in Zungeru in Niger state. Adejunmobi, (1990) studied the problems and prospects of self-help community development in selected Nigerian rural communities, in all of these studies, appraisal of self-help projects in rural Otegbo community in Ughelli South Local Government Area of Delta state, Nigeria and the need for professional social workers (community development experts) is still lacking. To bridge this gap in knowledge the following research questions will be investigated: (1) What are the self-help projects executed in the study area? (2) To what extent did the community members participate in the self-help development process in the study area? How sustainable are the self-help projects implemented in the study area? (3) What are the problems, if any, militating against execution of self-help projects in the study areas? and (4) What suggestions can be proffered that could enhance more successful execution of self-help projects in the study area?

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were tested in this study:

1. Male respondents participate in the self-help development projects more than female respondents.

2. People who participate at higher degree in self-help development projects perceive the projects as more sustainable than those who participate at lower level.

## **Materials and Method**

### ***Research design***

A cross sectional survey design was adopted for the study. This design has to do with observations of a sample or a cross section of a population or phenomenon that are made at one point in time (Babbie, 2010). The observations and collection of primary data for this study were made from a cross section of the target population.

### ***Study area***

This study covered Otegbo rural community in Ughelli South Local Government Area of Delta state. There are four quarters in the community, namely, Tadjughu, Eruvwere, Ikritigbun and Krezi. It is one of the ten ancient communities that comprise Owahwa Sub-crown of Ughievwen kingdom. It shares common boundaries with these rural communities: Ighwrogun on the North, Okwemor on the South, Egbo-Ideh on the West, and Otutuama on the East. The indigenes are mainly traders, local gin distillers, cavers, palm oil producers, fishermen and women, and subsistence farmers. The rationale for the inclusion of the four quarters in the community was for the purpose of adequate coverage in order to ascertain the types of self-help projects embarked upon, level of involvement of the community members, and sustainability of the projects.

### ***Sample size***

The sample size for the questionnaire was statistically determined to be 125 using Taro Yamane's (2011) formula. In addition, 16 members of the community participated in the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), while four community leaders were interviewed using in-depth interview guide. Thus, the total sample size was 145.



### *Sampling procedure*

The multistage sampling technique, comprising cluster, simple proportion, systematic sampling and purposive sampling methods, was used in this study. The four existing quarters in the community were adopted as clusters. Simple proportion was used to allocate the questionnaire to each of the quarters based on existing number of households. This gave equal opportunity to every element to be included in the study. Only adult members of the community, between the age range of 18 years and above, were included in the sample. To reach the respondents, a route was purposively selected in each of the quarters. Using the systematic sampling technique, every other household in each building was chosen, and two eligible respondents were selected, until the required 125 respondents were attained.

Thereafter, the purposive sampling method was adopted to select one interviewee, from each of the four quarters, for the IDIs. These included opinion/community leaders. Also, the purposive sampling method was adopted to select 16 participants for the FGDs in the community. The participants were of the same sex, which constituted a homogenous group. This was to allow for free flow of unbiased discussions. Two FGDs were conducted in the community. One of the sessions was for males and the other session for females. Thus, a total of two FGDs were conducted, with each session made up of eight members. The interviewees and participants for the IDIs and FGDs were those who were not chosen for the administration of the questionnaire.

### *Research instruments*

In the study, the questionnaire, IDI guide and FGD guide were the instruments for data collection. The questionnaire was the major instrument for quantitative data collection, and it was in two sections. The first section covered respondents' personal data, while the second section covered knowledge of self-help projects executed in the community. The

questionnaire was other administered. This enabled the participation of persons with formal and without formal educational background, and for high return rate of the completed questionnaire. On the other hand, the in-depth interview guide and the focus group discussion guide were used to gather detailed qualitative data to substantiate the quantitative data from the questionnaire. A reliability co-efficient of 0.89 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha in order to determine the reliability of the questionnaires. Also, pre-tests of the instruments were carried out in Okwemor, a neighbouring community to Otegbo community in Ughelli South Local Government Area of Delta State, where a town hall self-help projects was executed.

The pre-test of the questionnaire was done using six respondents, while, a pre-test of the In-depth Interview guide was conducted using one male and one female who were community leaders. The pretest of the Focus Group Discussion guide was carried out in two sessions in the community. One of the sessions was for males and the other for females. Each of the sessions was made up of eight members. The participants were of the same sex, who constituted a homogenous group to allow for free flow of unbiased discussions. The pre-tests of the research instruments for data collection were carried out before the final administration of the research instruments in the study area.

### *Data analysis*

The data analysis was based on 120 questionnaires, which were duly completed and returned. Analysis of quantitative data was done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 22. Descriptive statistics, such as simple frequency distributions in form of tables were used. The qualitative data from the IDIs and the FGDs were analysed by going through the field data to identify and select concepts and expressions which respondents used in describing the phenomenon under investigation. This led to a better understanding of how the people,

themselves, assessed the self-help projects embarked upon in their community.

## Results

### *Type of Self-help projects executed*

All the respondents, FGD participants and the IDI interviewees indicated that a town hall, water borehole, open wells, and road/paths construction and maintenance were the self-help projects embarked upon by the community.

**Table 1:** Distribution of Respondents by Areas of Participation in the Self-help Projects ( $n=120$ )

Areas of Participation	Yes	No
Financial contribution	75 (62.5%)	45 (37.5%)
Provision of Security	38 (31.7%)	82 (68.3%)
Provision of labour	47 (39%)	73 (61%)
Provision of land	120 (100%)	0 (0%)

Table 1 above reveals that 62.5 percent of the respondents were involved in the area of financial contribution, 31.7 percent were involved in provision of security. Also, 39 percent were involved in provision of labour, while 100 percent said they were involved in provision of land. All the respondents indicated that they were involved in the area of provision of land, followed by involvement in the area of financial contribution. Similarly, participants in the FGD sessions mainly agreed that they were involved the areas of provision of land and financial contribution. The IDIs interviewees were of different opinions, but they maintained that they were mainly involved in the area of provision of land. This result is not surprising because the land belongs to the entire community and it was given out for the projects, while the sources of funding were through personal contribution and mainly from the community purse. One of their typical comments is:

There are some parcels of land that are owned by the community, if there is need for a community project, we always utilize those ones...or the community will buy from owners for a better site. However, the parcels of land that are used for the present projects are generally owned by the community ...yes, any of the community members who claimed to have provided the land is right because in actual sense, we all, including the unborn, provided the land for the projects. It is our land (A male IDI interviewee in Eruvwere quarter, Otegbo community).

**Table 2:** Distribution of Respondents by Stages of Participation in the Self-help Projects ( $n=120$ )

Stages of Participation	Yes	No
Need assessment	98 (81.7%)	22 (18.3%)
Planning	70 (58.3%)	50 (41.7%)
Implementation	72 (60%)	48 (40%)
Monitoring	34 (28.3%)	86 (71.7%)
Evaluation	26 (21.7%)	94 (78.3%)

Table 2 clearly indicates that 81.7 percent of the respondents were involved in the need assessment stage, 58.3 percent were involved in planning stage, 60 percent were involved in implementation stage, 28.3 percent were involved in projects monitoring, while 21.7 percent were involved in evaluation stage. The FGDs participants mainly agreed that they were involved in the projects but only at the need assessment stage. IDIs interviewees varied in their stages of involvement in the self-help projects across the four quarters of the community. However, the interviewees maintained that they were mainly involved at the need assessment and implementation stages of the projects. For instance, one of the interviewees stressed:

We take decisions together in our general meetings. The men folk also hold theirs, when it comes to issues that affect the entire community, joint meetings are held, and decisions are jointly taken, then whichever party that is saddled with the execution of the responsibility takes charge... For the projects we met to decide the type of project. Thereafter, the responsibilities rest mainly on the council of elders, the (project) committee members, and the youth... in respect of the maintenance of our roads (A female IDI interviewee in Ekritigbun quarter, Otegbo community).

**Table 3:** Distribution of Respondents by Problems hindering the Project(s) from Providing Services Continuously in the Study Area ( $n=29$ )

Perceived Problems	Yes	No
Inadequate funding	7 (24%)	22 (76%)
Lack of technical knowhow	5 (17%)	25 (86%)
Low educational level	10 (34.5%)	19 (65.5%)
Inadequate involvement of women	7 (24%)	21 (76%)

Table 3 indicates that out of the 29 respondents, who said that the self-help development projects were not sustainable, 24 percent indicated that inadequate funding was one of the problems hindering the projects from providing services continuously to the community, 17 percent indicated lack of technical knowhow, 34 percent indicated low educational level, while 24 percent indicated inadequate involvement of women in the projects as the problem. The results show that the major problem hindering the self-help developmental projects from providing services continuously to the community was low educational level of the community members. This is followed by inadequate funding of the self-help projects and inadequate involvement of women in the self-help development process. FGD participants and IDI interviewees who said that the self-help projects were not providing services continuously to their community were probed

further to mention the problems they perceived to be the hindrances. In the FGD sessions, across the study area, participants unanimously agreed that low educational level of the community members was the major problem hindering the projects from providing services continuously to the community. An interviewee opined that:

The major problem facing our bore water is low level of education. This is because most of us are not very much educated and no adequate skills, particularly among us (the women). In most cases, we travel to Warri to get the services of a repairer whenever the water pump goes bad...for some days we do not have access to the borehole water. Moreover, due to inadequate funding, the water has not been connected to some quarters (A female IDI interviewee, in Tadjughu quarter, Otegbo community).

### **Test of Hypotheses**

The study examined the relationships between two independent variables and two dependent variables. The independent variables include: sex of respondents and level of participation of respondents in self-help projects. The dependent variables used include: level of participation of respondents in self-help projects and sustainability of self-help projects. Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) statistics, at  $p \leq 0.05$  level of significance, was used to determine whether there were any significant relationships between the variables. For the purpose of easier explanation and better understanding, all respondents who indicated 'always involved', were recoded as higher level of participation, while all respondents who indicated 'often involved' and 'rarely involved' were recoded as lower level of participation.

### ***Hypothesis One***

H<sub>1</sub>: Male respondents participated in the self-help development projects more than female respondents.

H<sub>0</sub>: Male respondents did not participate in the self-help development projects more than female respondents.

**Table 4:** Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Sex and Level of Participation in the Projects

Sex of Respondents	Level of Participation			$\chi^2$ p-value
	Higher	Lower	Total	
Male	30 (25.0%)	51 (42.5%)	81 (67.5%)	$\chi^2 = 7.473$ , df = 1, p = 0.005
Female	5 (4.2%)	34 (28.3%)	39 (32.5%)	
Total	35 (29.2%)	85 (70.8%)	120 (100%)	

Source: *Field Survey, 2019*

Table 4 below shows that 25 percent of the male respondents and 4.2 percent of the female respondents participated at a higher level, in the self-help development projects. On the other hand, of all the respondents who participated in the self-projects at a lower level, 42.5 percent were males, while 28.3 percent were females. The result therefore indicates that male respondents participated more in self-help development projects than the female respondents. The reasons for this may be attributed to the fact that the males are usually saddled with the responsibilities to make most important decisions, including self-help development matters, in the study area. Also, Table 4 shows a computed Chi-square value of  $\chi^2 = 7.473$ , df = 1, p = 0.005 at df = 1 and p = 0.005, while the critical Chi-square value at df = 1 and p = 0.05 is 3.841. Therefore, since the computed value is greater than the critical value, we accept the hypothesis which states that male respondents participate in the self-help development projects more than female respondents. From this result, we therefore conclude that people's sex has influence on participation in self-help developmental process.

### *Hypothesis Two*

H<sub>i</sub>: People who participated at higher degree in self-help development projects perceived the projects as more sustainable than those who participated at lower level.

H<sub>o</sub>: People who participated at higher degree in self-help development projects did not perceived the projects as more sustainable than those who participated at lower level.

**Table 5:** Percentage Distribution of Respondents Level of Participation and Sustainability in the Projects

Level of Participation	Sustainability		Total	$\chi^2$ p-value
	Yes	No		
Higher	35 (29.2%)	0 (0%)	35 (29.2%)	$\chi^2 = 15.747$ , df = 1, p = 0.000
Lower	56 (46.6%)	29 (24.2%)	85 (70.8%)	
Total	91(75.8%)	29 (24.2%)	120 (100%)	

Source: *Field Survey, 2019*

It can be seen from Table 5 above that all those who participated at higher level, 29.2 percent, and 46.6 percent of the respondents who participated at lower level, indicated that the self-help projects were sustainable. The result shows that the respondents who indicated that they participated, at lower level, in the self-help development projects, rated the projects as more unsustainable compared with those who participated at higher level. Also, Table 5 indicates a computed Chi-square value of 15.747 at df = 1 and p = 0.000, while the critical Chi-square value at df = 1 and p = 0.05 is 3.841. The chi-square value shows that there is a statistically significant relationship between level of participation of respondents and sustainability of self-help development projects in the study area. We therefore accept the hypothesis which states that people who participate at higher degree in self-help development projects perceive the projects as more sustainable than those who participate at lower level. This implies that when rural community



members are adequately involved in self-help development projects, they see them as their own properties, and as such, they are more committed to the maintenance of the projects and they guard them jealously.

### **Discussion**

All the respondents, FGD participants and the IDI interviewees agreed that a town hall, water borehole, open wells, and road/paths construction and maintenance were the self-help projects embarked upon by the community. They also indicated that they were all involved in the self-help projects in one area or the other. The findings show that all the respondents, participants and interviewees said they were involved mainly in the area of provision of land. This is because the parcels of the land on which the projects were executed belong to the entire community, and decisions for their utilisation were unanimously reached in their consultative meetings. This finding is related to empowerment theory which has the core assumption that personal, interpersonal and environmental resources are needed to update the skills, knowledge and motivation of people to achieve valid social roles (Solomon, 1976), and the capacity of individuals, groups and/or communities to take control of circumstances, collectively, to help themselves and others to maximise the quality of their lives (Adams, 2008).

On stages of participation, the study revealed that the community members mainly participated at need assessment stage. This was followed by participations at implementation and planning stages. Thereafter, the zeal for active participations by community members dwindled down the development process. This result is not surprising because monitoring and evaluation stages were left for the community leaders (elders' council) who were mainly males at the expense of the female counterpart. The people's culture arrogates decision making on certain issues, such as community development matters and other sensitive matters that has to do with the entire community, to the men folk or council of elders consisting of only adult males. Furthermore, on level of participation in the self-help projects,

the study revealed that a few females, compared with the males, participated at a higher level. This finding corroborates Danladi and Adefila (2014) who revealed in their study that a large proportion of the leadership of the self-help groups was more of males than females, and as such, men were more interested and involved in the development of their community than the women, despite that the people's culture also affected the women's participation.

From the research findings, all those who participated at a higher level of the self-help development projects agreed that the projects were providing the needed services continuously to their community. This finding is in line with Akpomuvie (2010) who revealed, from his study in 20 communities in Ethiope East and West Local Government Areas of Delta state, that self-help projects have been successful in Urhobo-land simply because participants see them as their own, meeting and satisfying their needs. The results further showed that 100 percent involvement is the case from conception to execution, and there was sustenance of such facilities.

The study revealed that the self-help projects faced inadequate funding, lack of technical knowhow, low educational level, and inadequate involvement of women in the self-help development process. However, low educational level ranked highest mostly among the women. This finding buttresses the findings of other scholars in their study conducted in Mansa Diocese, Zambia, which revealed that the project suffered sustainability due to poor community participation, low educational levels among households, undiversified households, poor understanding of governance, and women were the most uneducated and least to participate in community projects (Lungo, Mavole & Martin, 2017). Finally, the study established that male respondents participate in self-help development projects more than female respondents. Also, people who participate at higher degree in self-help development projects perceive the projects as more sustainable than those who participate at lower level.

Based on the findings of this study, there is utmost necessity for professionalization of social work in developing nations, particularly, in Nigeria. This would enable trained professional social workers (community development experts) to be involved in formulation and implementation of development programmes/projects at the macro and micro levels to enhance rapid improvement of standards of living of rural communities in Nigeria and other developing nations.

The involvement of professional social workers (community development experts) in development programmes/projects in Nigeria would increase active participation of community members in the development process. Thus, beneficiary community members would be given the chance to analyse their own situations, design solutions that would lead to more appropriate development strategies and attainment of more sustainable self-help projects. There is need for government to create enabling environment for rural communities to execute more successful and sustainable self-help projects. This should be done by providing adequate information, technical aids, and development grants to rural communities through professional social workers across the three tiers of Nigerian government. Rural community members should be empowered, as many as are interested, socially and economically irrespective of their sex to participate in development process. This will enable them to explore and assess many needs as possible and eventual selection of their most prioritised solution to their problem(s) themselves. Finally, when professional social workers are involved they will play advocacy role to ensure that the needs of the poorest of the poor, women and youth are given adequate consideration in prioritising rural communities' needs. This will help to reduce rural-urban migration, especially of the youth, and given sense of belonging.

The study has some limitations, one of which is the fact that only one community was chosen for the study. Thus, conclusion drawn may not be

generalised for all of the Ughelli South Local Government Area of Delta state. Therefore, there may be need to sample more communities to make a more generalised conclusion.

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